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STRATEGEMS

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PAPER

THE 36 CHINESE STRATEGIES APPLIED TO NEGOTIATION



The Thirty-six Chinese Strategies or Stratagems are a collection of tactics that can be applied to very different situations. In China, the tactics are somewhat like proverbs or folklore. They have been described as <gems that speak to the cores of Chinese society>. Chinese children learn them. They are taught in school, found in literature, popular folk opera, and sometimes even in the modern media. It is said that these strategies have become part of the “collective unconscious” of most Chinese people. The strategies are derived from military tactics applied during the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.) or during in the famous Three Kingdom Period (220-265 B.C.). Just about anyone who has “grown up Chinese” (meaning that they have grown up in a Chinese home that respects and teaches Chinese traditions) know these Thirty-six Strategies. The author (or authors) of the strategies are unknown (they are more than one, or just unknown).

Thirty-six Strategies have taken on greater significance. The Thirty-six Strategies have become a part of a number of various ancient military approaches that have been modified, and applied to the world of business.

Although, the Thirty-Six Strategies are supposedly derived from military strategy, they also seem to reflect the Chinese approach to business, especially business with foreigners. A common Chinese expression is <The marketplace is like a battlefield> or <The marketplace is a battlefield>. For the Chinese, business is like war.

	<i>The Original 36 Strategies</i>	<i>Contemporary Maxims</i>
1	<i>Cross the Sea by Deceiving the Sky.</i>	<i>Act in the open, but hide your true intentions.</i>
2	<i>Besiege Wei to Rescue Zhao.</i>	<i>Attack their Achilles heel.</i>
3	<i>Kill with a Borrowed Knife.</i>	<i>Attack using the strength of another person.</i>
4	<i>Relax & Wait for the Adversary to Tire Himself Out. Await leisurely the exhausted enemy.</i>	<i>Exercise patience & wear them down</i>
5	<i>Loot a Burning House.</i>	<i>Hit them when they are down.</i>
6	<i>Make a Feint to the East While Attacking in the West.</i>	<i>Fake to the right , attack to the left.</i>
7	<i>Create Something Out of Nothing.</i>	<i>Turn something that is not substantial into reality</i>
8	<i>Secretly Utilize the Chen Cang Passage. Pretend to Advance Down One Path While Taking Another Hidden Path</i>	<i>Pretend to care about an issue & later give it up to get what you really want.</i>
9	<i>Watch the Fire Burning from Across the River.</i>	<i>Allow them to fight your other enemy while you rest and observe. Later, defeat the exhausted survivor.</i>
10	<i>Conceal a Dagger in a Smile.</i>	<i>Befriend them to get their guard down, then attack their weakest point.</i>
11	<i>Sacrifice a Plum Tree to Save a Peach Tree. Let the Plum Tree Wither in Place of the Peach Tree.</i>	<i>Trade up! Take a small loss for a large gain.</i>
12	<i>Take Away a Goat in Passing.</i>	<i>Take advantage of every small opportunity.</i>
13	<i>Beat the Grass to Startle the Snake.</i>	<i>Stir things up before beginning to negotiate for your true interests.</i>
14	<i>Raise a Corpse from the Dead. Borrow a Corpse to Return the Soul.</i>	<i>Revive a dead proposal by presenting it again or in a new way.</i>
15	<i>Lure the Tiger out of the Mountain.</i>	<i>Seek a neutral location. Negotiate after leading them away from a position of strength.</i>
16	<i>Let the Adversary off in order to Snare Him. To Capture the Enemy, First Let It Go.</i>	<i>Do not arouse their spirit to fight back.</i>
17	<i>Toss out a Brick to Attract a piece of Jade. Toss out a Brick to Attract Jade.</i>	<i>Trade something of minor value for something of major value.</i>
18	<i>To Catch Bandits, Nab Their Ringleader First. To Catch the Bandits, First Catch Their Ringleader.</i>	<i>Convince the leader and the rest will follow.</i>
19	<i>Remove the Fire from under the Cauldron.</i>	<i>Eliminate the source of their strength.</i>
20	<i>Muddle the water to catch the fish. Gathering Fish from Trouble Waters.</i>	<i>Do something surprising or unexpected to unnerve them, and then take advantage of that situation.</i>

21	<i>The Cicada Sheds Its Shells. The Golden Cicada Sheds Its Shell. The Cicada Sloughs Its Shell.</i>	<i>When you are in trouble, secretly escape.</i>
22	<i>Fasten the Door to Catch a Thief. Lock the Door and Catch the Thief.</i>	<i>Completely destroy them by leaving no way for escape.</i>
23	<i>Befriend a Distant State While Attacking a Neighboring State. Befriend Distant States While Attacking Nearby Ones.</i>	<i>Build strategic alliances with others that will give you the upper hand.</i>
24	<i>Borrow a Safe Passage to Conquer the Kingdom of Guo. Attack Hu by a Borrowed Path.</i>	<i>Temporarily join forces with a friend against a common enemy.</i>
25	<i>Steal the Dragon and Replace with the Phoenix. Steal the Beams and Pillars and Replace Them with Rotten Timber. Steal the Beams and Change the Pillars.</i>	<i>Sabotage, incapacitate, or destroy them by removing their key support.</i>
26	<i>Point at the Mulberry Tree but Curse the Locust Tree.</i>	<i>Convey your intentions and opinions indirectly.</i>
27	<i>Feign madness, but keep your balance. Pretend to be a Pig in Order to eat the Tiger. Play Dumb. Feign Ignorance and Hide One's Intentions.</i>	<i>Play Dumb, then surprise them. Let them underestimate you.</i>
28	<i>Remove the Ladder after your ascent. Lure the enemy onto the roof, then take away the ladder. Cross the River and Destroy the Bridge.</i>	<i>Lead them into a trap, then cut off their escape.</i>
29	<i>Decorate the Tree with Fake Blossoms. Flowers Bloom in the Tree.</i>	<i>Reframe deceitfully. Expand the pie with objects of little value.</i>
30	<i>Turn Yourself into a Host from Being a Guest. Host and Guest Switch Roles.</i>	<i>Turn your defensive and passive position into an offensive and active one.</i>
31	<i>Use a Beauty to Ensnare a Man. The honey trap. Beauty Trap.</i>	<i>Provide alluring distractions.</i>
32	<i>Open the Gate of an Undefended City. The Empty City Stratagem.</i>	<i>Deliberately displaying your weakness can conceal your vulnerability.</i>
33	<i>Use Adversary's Spies to Sow Discord in Your Adversary's Camp. Turn the Enemy's Agents against Him.</i>	<i>Provide inaccurate information to mislead them, especially through informal channels.</i>
34	<i>Inflict Pain on Oneself in order to Infiltrate Adversary's Camp and Win the Confidence of the Enemy. Self-Torture.</i>	<i>Appear to take some hits. Feign weakness while arming yourself.</i>
35	<i>Lead Your Adversary to Chain Together Their Warships. Stratagem on Stratagems.</i>	<i>Devise a set of interlocking stratagems to defeat them.</i>
36	<i>Retreat is the Best Option. If All Else Fails, Run Away.</i>	<i>Purse your BATNA.</i>

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